



Judy Watts/Journal Scene

# Deona Ryan Bien

## Triumph over tragedy

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**T**urning the most devastating personal tragedy into a life of trying to keep others from experiencing the same tragedy, is what helped 46-year-old Deona Bien of Summerville survive after the accidental death of her daughter.

Left in a car for an hour by her babysitter, Bien's daughter Aslyn Ryan, died from hyperthermia only a few days after her first birthday.

She speaks calmly of the tragedy that brought her to where she is today.

"It took seven years of fertility treatments to have her," says Bien, "and she was a twin, but I was only able to carry Aslyn to term. She weighed four pounds, two ounces when she was born and was such a good-natured baby."

"On Feb. 1, 2004, she turned 1. On Feb. 5 her babysitter left her in the car for 50 minutes. She was in ICU for two days with global brain damage. She died Feb. 7."

Bien became a ferocious activist for child

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safety.

Her first endeavor was to get legislation passed in Hawaii in memory of Aslyn, with regard to leaving children in cars.

She succeeded in getting the legislation to include an education component, a question on the driver's license exam, a notice in all rental cars and a fine and parenting class for anyone charged with leaving a child in a car.

Her next step was similar legislation in Arizona and then South Carolina.

She is the vice president of Kids and Cars.org., one of the leading organizations to keep kids safe, she says.

She is a contributor to national broadcast blended learning services on hyperthermia and a Red Cross blended learning contributor as well.

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## Bien

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She has given national interviews, been in USA Today and on talk shows.

"It's my biggest passion," she says.

Bien also does a lot of work with Post Partum Support in Charleston including the annual Mom's Run just before Mother's Day.

She is, she says, the chair of Safe Kids for the Trident area and champions bike helmets, spot the tot, poison prevention, ATV safety and drowning prevention. She works for the March of Dimes, organizes local events such as Race for the Cure and does a lot of fundraising for the American Heart Association.

She organizes the Angels of Ours evening, an annual event during the holidays for parents who have gone through fetal loss, she explains, held in the Doty Park Depot building.

During the workday, she is the director of Women and Children for Trident Health Services overseeing all services for women and children. She is, she says, responsible for the new pediatric inpatient and ER at Summerville Medical Center and developed the maternal fetal medicine program - an online program for high

risk pregnancies that connects pregnant women with specialists from around the country. She began the OB Hospitalist at SMC, which provides someone in-house 24/7.

She earned an Associate's Degree in Nursing from Amarillo College and one in law from Kaplan before graduating Summa Cum Laude with a BSN from Kaplan.

Last August she married Jesse Bien, a Life Safety instructor at the Charleston base.

She has a son, Dusty Mansfield, 27, who works with the Texas Department of Transportation; two step-daughters - Mackenzie, 11 and Kelseigh, 16 - two step sons - Jeremy Ryan, 27 and Michael Ryan, 21.

In her spare time she makes crafts and runs an online craft store. She says it is a stress reliever. She also teaches Zumba at the hospital.

She is planning to go back to school in January for her Master's in nursing through Kaplan.

After coming to the lowcountry to work at SMC, she "fell in love with the area. I can't imagine being anywhere else."

"I love the administrative team at SMC and Trident," she adds, "it's a lovely community and I have a happy life living here."

"I love bringing new programs to the community. I think as a nurse and director I can strive to do more to help the community, help people."

